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CONTENTS

- | | | |
|-------------------|---|-------|
| N. Joseph Torchia | Eschatological Elements in Jesus' Healing of the Gerasene Demoniac: An Exegesis of Mk. 5:1-20 | 2-27 |
| J.C. O'Neill | Jesus' Reply to his Mother at Cana of Galilee (John 2:4) | 28-35 |
| Steve Moyise | Seeing the Old Testament through a Lens | 36-42 |

Book Reviews

Concise Encyclopedia of Preaching edited by William H. Willimon and Richard Lischer. Louisville, Kentucky. Westminster John Knox Press, 1995 (Denis Campbell); Theodore Letis, *The Ecclesiastical Text: Text Criticism, Biblical Authority and the Popular Mind* (Philadelphia and Edinburgh: The Institute for Renaissance and Reformation Biblical Studies, 1997; 2nd. ed. 2000) (Crawford Gribben)

43-48

Eschatological Elements in Jesus' Healing of the Gerasene Demoniac: An Exegesis of Mk. 5:1-20

N. Joseph Torchia

The expulsion of demons assumes a special significance in Mark's treatment of Jesus' mighty deeds. Such healings are an effective means of affirming Jesus' power over evil, and provide startling occasions for his recognition as Son of God. But the incident also establishes a crucial beachhead for the Kingdom among non-Jews and for proclaiming the Good News in pagan territory. In a very real sense, however, this particular account assumes a profound eschatological significance when considered against the background of Mark's Gospel as a whole. Jesus' appearance in Gerasa entails an overturning of priorities on every level.

The expulsion of demons assumes a special significance in *Mark's* treatment of Jesus' mighty deeds. On the one hand, such radical healings provide a means of affirming Jesus' power and authority over evil in a decisive manner. *Mark* places these stories within a narrative framework that directs our attention away from the miraculous *per se*, and focuses instead upon their significance for Jesus' ongoing appearance.¹ Paradoxically, these healings provide startling occasions for Jesus' recognition as the *Holy One of God* or the *Son of God* (Mk. 1:21-28; 5:1-20). The fact that He is correctly identified by the demons themselves adds an intriguing dimension to a story in which He is continually misunderstood or even rejected by those closest to Him. The drama is only heightened when Jesus admonishes the demons to refrain from revealing His true identity (Mk. 1:25;34).

The Markan version of Jesus' healing of the Gerasene demoniac (5:1-20) is generally consistent with the exorcism accounts found in

¹ Paul J. Achtemeier, 'Gospel of Mark', *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Volume 4 (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 554b.

the Gospels. In the most elaborate rendering of this episode in the Synoptics, we find some of the key elements of this particular *genre*: Jesus' initial encounter with one who is possessed by a demon or demons; an exclamation on the part of the demon(s), and accompanying identification of Jesus; Jesus' expulsion of the demon(s) by means of a standard verbal formula; a complete transformation of the one formerly possessed. What is lacking in this account, however, is any attempt on Christ's part to silence the demon(s) or the one healed regarding His identity or role in this mighty deed. As used by *Mark*, this incident provides a means of establishing a crucial beachhead for the Kingdom among non-Jews, and thereby, for proclaiming the Good News in pagan territory. The discussion which follows comprises a detailed exegesis of Mk. 5:1-20, with a special focus upon the eschatological implications of Jesus' expansion of His mission among the Gentiles. As a point of departure, let us consider the general and immediate context of the passage under scrutiny.

Context

The overall structure of the contents of *Mark* admits of a variety of interpretations. For the purposes of this paper, however, the Gospel can be assessed in terms of four major parts: *first*, a Prologue (1:1-13), which imparts significant information to the reader regarding Jesus' identity, the role of John the Baptist and Jesus' baptism, and Jesus' temptations in the wilderness; *secondly*, a treatment of the mystery of Jesus (1:14-8:26), extending from the beginning of the Galilean ministry to the healing of the blind man of Bethsaida; *third*, the beginning of the revelation of the mystery (8:27-9:32), spanning the period from Peter's confession to the second prediction of the Passion; and *fourth*, the full revelation of the mystery (9:33-16:8), encompassing those events leading toward and surrounding Jesus' passion, death, and resurrection.

In its position at the approximate midpoint of the Gospel's second part, the immediate context of Mk. 5:1-20 is a subsection that begins with the call of the Twelve (3:13-19) and concludes with the Twelve's sending out on mission (6:7-13). Mk. 5:1-20 is intimately connected with the broader theme of discipleship; the pericope emerges in that portion of the Gospel in which Jesus establishes a

new family comprised of those who do the Father's will (3:21-35). These disciples are the direct recipients of Jesus' revelation of the mystery of God's Kingdom. Indeed, Jesus' progressive self-disclosure to the disciples through words, mighty deeds, and miraculous works is intimately related to His announcement of God's new reign over every aspect of creation.² But by the same

² Parallel accounts of the episode recounted at Mk. 5:1-20 are found in both *Matthew* (8:28-34) and *Luke* (8:26-39). The Lukan version is extremely close to the Markan in respect to content and ordering of events, and nearly identical in regard to language. *Luke*, however, all but eliminates *Mark's* informative profile of the demoniac and merely alludes to his need for physical restraint in an aside later in the passage (8:29). *Luke* also omits *Mark's* reference to the number of swine in the herd. *Matthew*, on the other hand, severely abridges the account. In addition to its extreme brevity, major departures from its Synoptic counterparts lie in (a) its use of two victims of demonic possession; (b) its exclusion of any final encounter between Jesus and the beneficiaries of His mighty deeds; and (c) its reference to a completely different place name (i.e., "the territory of the Gadarenes" as opposed to "the territory of the Gerasenes" in both *Mark* and *Luke*). In this regard, the Matthean version clearly places Jesus at center stage. In contrast to what we find in *Mark* and *Luke*, *Matthew* does not afford the demoniacs the opportunity to speak with Jesus and make their requests. Rather, the account directs our attention solely to Jesus and His authoritative power in inaugurating the Kingdom of God. In regard to context, the Lukan version emerges in a section which exhibits a striking similarity to what we find in *Mark*: Jesus' healing of the Gerasene demoniac is preceded by a series of parables, the appearance of Jesus' family members (although *Mark* places this episode before the parables), and the calming of the storm episode. Both *Mark* and *Luke* place the story of Jairus' daughter and the woman with a hemorrhage immediately after the healing of the Gerasene demoniac. *Luke* departs from *Mark*, however, in the following chapter by omitting the account of Jesus' rejection at Nazareth, but returns to the Markan ordering in treating the mission of the Twelve (Lk. 9:1-6) and Herod's opinion of Jesus immediately thereafter (Lk. 9:7-9). In *Matthew*, on the other hand, the healing of the Gadarene demoniacs is part of a distinct miracle story section (Mt. 8:1- 9:34), comprising three groups of miracle stories (with ten miracles in all). This particular section focuses on Jesus as "Messiah of the Deed" and complements His portrayal as "Messiah of the Word" in Mt. 5:1-7:29. But in all three versions (i.e., Mt. 8:28-34; Mk. 5:1-20; Lk. 8:26-39), the episode reveals a power that only the Son of God could possess

token, this privileged revelation is riddled with tension. The misunderstandings on the part of Jesus' relatives and the scribes (3:20-22) regarding His ministry is also evident in the disciples' lack of faith, even in the face of what Jesus accomplishes.

In light of Jesus' mystery as Son of God, the healing of the Gerasene demoniac occupies a crucial role. Indeed, its placement immediately after Jesus' calming of the storm (4:35-41) underscores His power--not only over natural phenomena, but over the destructive forces of evil as well. In a manner consistent with *Mark's* association of Jesus' role as teacher with the performance of mighty deeds, Mk. 5:1-20 complements the earlier cure of a demoniac at Mk. 1:21-28.³ In both cases, such mighty deeds reinforce and legitimize Jesus' teaching authority: at Mk. 1:21-28, Jesus casts out the demon in the course of His teaching in the synagogue; at Mk. 5:1-20, the exorcism follows Jesus' teaching

and exercise. In each instance, the disciples share in Jesus' announcement of the Good News and in his authority as both teacher and healer (Mt. 10:1; Mk. 6:7; Lk. 9:1-2). In this respect, the theme of discipleship operative in each Synoptic account is closely connected with the emergence of God's Kingdom. This thematic link is most evident in Mk. 5:1-20 and its variation on the discipleship theme in a distinctly Gentile setting.

³ According to Mann (277-278), the two versions in the other synoptic Gospels allow for a useful contrast. Mann proposes the following theory to explain the differences between the versions (and their relation to each other) in these terms: In Matthew and Luke we have accounts which are terse, designed for easy memorization, whereas in Mark we have a narrative in which the evangelist has access to a far livelier and more dramatic narrative--in fact, so dramatic that he finds it imperative to insert v. 8 to relieve the confusion of detail. We can find some indications of the way in which the story developed from Matthew's version, where we have two men who are demon-possessed, in contrast with the one man of Mark and Luke. All of this seems to suggest to the present commentator that Mark had two versions of the story which Matthew had originally possessed, and telescoped into one. Mark used a combination of the terse and condensed Matthean account, together with his own "reminiscence source," and produced the present narrative.

activity by means of a series of parables. In effect, the reader is confronted with something of a staggered intensification of miracles, extending from (a) nature, to (b) the demonic realm, to (c) the evils of sickness and death. Yet the three successive healings (or cures) of individuals who are either pagans (as in the case of the Gerasene demoniac) or Jews outside of Jesus' immediate circle (as in the case of Jairus' daughter and the woman with the hemorrhage at Mk. 5:21-43) only magnifies the lack of faith in Jesus' disciples, in His fellow Nazarenes (6:1-6), and even in His own relatives.

Outline

For purposes of overview, the pericope can be reduced to the following schematic outline:

Introduction (5:1-5)

1. The setting is established (v. 1).
2. Jesus disembarks; meets a man with an unclean spirit (v.2).
3. The man's plight is described (vv. 3-5).

A. Jesus' encounter with the Gerasene demoniac (5:6-10)

1. The demoniac approaches Jesus and prostrates (v. 6).
2. The demoniac identifies Jesus (v. 7a).
3. The demoniac requests to be left alone after Jesus exorcises his evil spirits (vv. 7b-8).
4. The demoniac identifies himself as 'legion' in response to Jesus' query (v. 9).
5. The unclean spirits request a concession (v. 10).

B. Incident involving the herd of swine (5:11-14)

1. The spirits request entry into the swine (vv. 11-12).
2. The spirits enter the swine (v. 13a).
3. The herd rushes over the embankment and drowns (v.13b).

4. The swineherds flee in terror and report the incident (v. 14a).

C. Jesus' encounter with the townspeople (5:14b-17)

1. The townspeople come forward to investigate (v. 14b) and observe that the former demoniac is now clothed and sane (v. 15).
2. The eyewitnesses describe what they have seen (v. 16).
3. The townspeople beg Jesus to depart the territory (v. 17).

Conclusion: Jesus' final confrontation with the healed demoniac (5:18-20)

1. The man begs Jesus to allow him to follow Him, i.e., to be be His disciple (v. 18).
2. Jesus commands the man to return home and proclaim what has happened there (v. 19).
3. The man proclaims Jesus' deed far and wide (v. 20).

Exegesis of Mk. 5:1-20

The pericope begins with a geographical observation that situates the story in the 'territory of the Gerasenes' (τῶν Γερασηνῶν), in the general region of the Decapolis (as borne out by what we are told at 5:20). *Mark's* identification of the area is somewhat problematic for two reasons. On the one hand, we find a disparity of place names in the Synoptic accounts (i.e., 'Gerasenes' in *Mark* and *Luke*; 'Gadarenes' in *Matthew*). On the other hand, the textual tradition of the Synoptics exhibits some confusion. The most commonly accepted solution to this problem assumes the following form: since *Mark's* placement of the incident in the territory of the Gerasenes is untenable on geographical grounds (as Gerasa was thirty to forty miles southeast of the Sea of Galilee or Lake of Tiberius), *Matthew* apparently substituted a more feasible (but still distant) location in

relation to the lake shore (i.e., Gadara--a town roughly six miles away).⁴

But despite such difficulties, the opening of the Markan account stresses a key point: Jesus and His party have crossed *to the other side of the sea* (εἰς τὸ πέραν τῆς θαλάσσης). Elsewhere (Mk. 3:8; 10:1), the term *πέραν* designates the region *beyond the Jordan* or the *eastern side of the Jordan* (πέραν τοῦ Ἰορδάνου). In textual terms, the reference *to the other side of the sea* provides a direct link with the preceding pericope regarding Jesus' calming of the storm (4:35-41). These mighty deeds display Jesus' power and authority over the forces of nature and evil, respectively. The fact that the latter work occurs in pagan territory widens the extent of Jesus' power, and thereby, the scope of His authority. In Mk. 5:21, Jesus again crosses εἰς τὸ πέραν, enroute to His healings of Jairus' daughter and the woman with the hemorrhage. In a broader eschatological sense, the sea provides the place where the forces of evil and chaos reside.

The specific setting of the episode, then, becomes a matter of secondary importance. What is most important is the fact that Mk. 5:1 informs us that Jesus and His disciples have entered Gentile, and more specifically, pagan territory. From this standpoint, their physical passage εἰς τὸ πέραν entails a more significant religious and cultural transition from a Jewish to a non-Jewish region that breaks down the barriers that separate these peoples.⁵ The account

⁴ Boring, 231. Also see Fitzmyer (736-37), for a detailed and illuminating analysis of the debate surrounding this issue. As Fitzmyer wryly observes (736), "the stampede of the pigs from Gerasa to the Lake would have made them the most energetic herd in history!" For a treatment of the manuscript traditions and the difficulties they generate, see the summary of Johnson, 100-101. Cf., the compromise solution of Origen (*Commentary on John*, 6,41), who stressed the untenability of both Gerasa and Gadara, and instead proposed Gergesa. Hooker (142) points out, however, that Gergesa cannot now be positively identified.

⁵ According to Pesch (284), the phrase εἰς τὸ πέραν is a "catch phrase" of the pre-Markan miracle history collection (cf., 4:35; 5:21; and 6:45).

that follows might be viewed as something of a prelude or anticipation of Jesus' mission to the Gentiles (explicitly treated in the story of the Syrophenician woman at Mk. 7:24-30).

Jesus' entry into Gentile territory coincides with the appearance of a man depicted as the very embodiment of impurity. In light of what Mk. 1:23-24 has already disclosed (where the unclean spirit recognizes Jesus) and what subsequent developments demonstrate, Jesus' very appearance poses a threat. In this respect, the man's initiative in coming to meet Jesus should not be construed as a friendly gesture of greeting, but rather, as an act of confrontation.⁶ Here, however, the reader encounters an apparent ambiguity in v. 2b (ἐκ τῶν μνημείων ἄνθρωπος ἐν πνεύματι ἁκαθάρτῳ) that allows for two alternate readings. On the one hand, the clause might be simply rendered as '*a man from the tombs* with an unclean spirit; on the other hand, it might be interpreted as '*a man with an unclean spirit from the tombs.*' While the difference is subtle (and perhaps, even negligible), each rendering brings to the fore a different nuance of the man's defilement: in the former, his possession by an unclean spirit is underscored by his own emergence from the tombs, sites connected with corruption and death; in the latter, we might view the man as possessed by spirits who themselves come from the tombs (since tombs were considered favored dwelling places for demons in the ancient world).⁷

In any case, the man's intimacy with these places of the dead is borne out by the fact that *he had his abode* (ὅς τὴν κατοίκησιν εἶχεν) *among the tombs* (v. 3). According to **Pesch** (285), v. 3 states explicitly what was already disclosed at v. 2. But what manner of individual inhabits a graveyard? Such a dwelling is suitable for one

⁶ **Anderson** observes (147-48) that Mark's appropriation of the name "Gerasa" from the tradition for use in the context of this story (with the apparent assumption that it was close to the sea) "does not say much for his acquaintance with Palestinian topography," but "probably all that concerned him was that the story was set in the partially Gentile territory of the Decapolis."

⁷ **Perkins**, 582a.

expelled from human society. As Perkins observes (582a), the demoniac's condition is the very antitype of the civilized Hellenistic society nearby. In actuality, the tombs of ancient Palestine consisted of caverns hewn out of rock or caves, and frequently provided dwellings for the utterly destitute.⁸ Because such enclosures were considered the *loci* of demons, those who lived there were suspected of demonic sacrifice.⁹

In contrast to the demoniac who confronts Jesus in the synagogue (Mk. 1:21-28), and those He exorcises all over Galilee (Mk. 1:39), this individual is clearly an outcast. His complete ostracism accentuates the horror of his situation. In a culture which placed such a high value on the life of the *polis* and its communitarian benefits, such a man could only be numbered among the living dead. To some extent, life ἐν τοῖς μνήμασιν finds a present day counterpart in life 'on the street': in this contemporary version of the social ostracism of the Gerasene demoniac, the homeless likewise resign themselves to a living death (albeit within the boundaries of thriving urban centers).¹⁰

One line of interpretation, however, also perceives indications of insanity in his behavior. This consideration, of course, raises issues which far exceed the narrow parameters of this discussion. But for the present purposes, it suffices to recognize that what our contemporaries readily diagnose as symptoms of pathological

⁸ Kittel, 597; Johnson, 101; Branscombe, 91; NJBC, 607a.

⁹ The notion that such habitations were associated with those in the most desperate straits finds Old Testament support in the LXX versions of Jb. 30:5-6 (*Thieves have risen up against me, whose houses were the caves of the rocks.*); Ps. 67:6 (*God settles the solitary in a house...even them that dwell in tombs.*); and Isa. 65:4 (*They lie down to sleep in the tombs and in the caves... all their vessels are defiled.*).

¹⁰ Perkins (585) develops this theme in this manner: Some of the mentally ill homeless persons in large cities, especially those who exhibit violent behaviour, evoke the same fear and repulsion in people today that the demoniac must have inspired in ancient Palestinians.

insanity, emotional disturbances, or severe forms of depression might have been explained in terms of demonic possession by ancient observers. Several commentators, for example, allude to the fact that the *Talmud* specified the act of sleeping on a grave as a sign of madness (along with walking outdoors at night, tearing one's clothes, and destroying one's possessions).¹¹

On the basis of the assertion (v. 3b) that *no one was able to bind him any longer* (οὐκέτι), we can easily gather that this man had already posed a threat sufficient enough to warrant physical restraint. But the inability to bind him even with a chain (καὶ οὐδὲ ἄλύσει...οὐδεὶς ἐδύνατο αὐτὸν δῆσαι) suggests a degree of strength that can only proceed from supernatural origins. This point is reiterated and embellished in v. 4: we now learn that the demoniac had been bound frequently (πολλάκις), with chains (ἀλύσειν) as well as shackles (πέδαις). But even such a double precaution does not suffice. Accordingly, v. 4b provides a clear rationale for his expulsion from human society and subsequent habitation *among the tombs*. His superhuman ability to tear apart (διασπάω) the chains and to break (συντρίβω) the shackles renders it wholly impossible for anyone to subdue (δαμάσαι) him.

Overall, v. 4 assumes the character of an aside inserted into the description of the demoniac's plight that begins in v. 3 and ends at v. 5. Mann (278) infers that this subsection is based upon an eyewitness report, as indicated by the use of the perfect tense in v. 4 ('as though what is being committed to writing unchanged is the oral narrative of bystanders') and the return to the imperfect tense at the end of v. 5 (i.e., ἦν). Its distinctive character is also evident in its unique terminology: *Mark* uses five terms (i.e., κατοίκησις, ἄλυσις, πέδη, διασπάω and δαμάζω) which are either peculiar to

¹¹ H. Van der Loos, *The Miracles of Jesus* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1965), 385. Also see Lane (182). Mann (278) points out that each of the Talmudic criteria for madness are met in this particular case.

vv. 3-4 alone, or else, occur but rarely throughout the New Testament.¹²

V. 5 resumes the line of thought initiated at v. 3 (and expanded upon at v. 4): *among the tombs and in the hills* (ἐν τοῖς μνήμασιν καὶ ἐν τοῖς ὄρεσιν) he was shrieking (ἦν κρᾶζων) and *bruising or gashing himself with stones* (κατακόπτων ἑαυτὸν λίθοις). How can such bizarre behavior be explained, except as an indication of madness or demonic possession? Lane (182, n. 9), for one, suggests that it might point to the practice of cutting the flesh in connection with the worship of demonic deities.¹³ From my standpoint, however, it also evokes the horrible image of the ulcerated Job, reduced to scraping his sores with a potsherd (Jb. 2:8). While the ostensible purpose of that act was to obtain some relief from his misery by a counterirritant, one commentator views it as a way of expressing grief.¹⁴ In both cases, we observe individuals in such desperate straits that their only recourse is a paradoxical intensification of their misery. But unlike Job, the demoniac has no compelling reason to justify his action. Accordingly, it assumes an unsettling nihilistic quality, as a senseless attempt at self-destruction prompted by demonic forces (the very antitheses of life).

We return to the present scene of action at v. 6. But v. 6 suggests an account that parallels (but slightly diverges from) the story that unfolds in vv. 1-2. In contrast to the earlier statement that the demoniac *came to meet Him* (v. 2), v. 6 stresses that he sees Jesus

¹² κατακῆσις occurs only at Mk. 5:3; ἄλυσις is found at Mk. 5:3-4, Ac. 12:6-7; 21:33; 28:20; Eph. 6:20; II Ti. 1:16; Rev. 20:1; διασπᾶω is found only at Mk. 5:4 and Ac. 23:10; δαμάζω is found only at Mk. 5:4 and Ja. 3:7-8.

¹³ See I Kg. 18:28 (the episode involving Elijah's encounter with the prophets of Baal): *They called out louder and slashed themselves with swords and spears, as was their custom, until blood gushed over them.*

¹⁴ Marvin H. Pope, *Job*, AB 15 (Garden City, New York): Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1973), 21. Cf., Lev. 19:28; 21:5; Deut. 14:1; Jer. 16:6; 41:5; 47:5; 48:37.

ἀπὸ μακρόθεν. Some view this apparent unevenness in the text as evidence for the synthesis of two narratives.¹⁵ But this seeming restatement of the event merely provides an additional detail that v. 2 already implies, namely, that the demoniac *came to meet* Jesus after seeing Him *from a distance*. In this regard, **Hooker** (143) appears to overstate the case by contending that ‘either Mark has pieced two stories together, or he has forgotten what he wrote there.’

The demoniac’s almost instantaneous prostration might be interpreted in several ways, each of which is consistent with the overall context: it might indicate fear before one perceived as more powerful; it might betoken an attitude of respect or even worshipfulness; it might even suggest a gesture of mock obeisance on the part of someone who defies all authority. But as v. 7 immediately shows, the last possibility must be ruled out. Clearly, Jesus has been able (by virtue of His appearance alone) to subdue the demoniac in a way that others could not—even with chains and shackles. This man is obviously no match for one who has tied up the ‘strong man’ that is Beelzebub (Mk. 3:27) and designated as the ‘mightier’ one coming after John the Baptist (Mk. 1:7).

In the present story, the extent of the demoniac’s fear is underscored by his *crying out with a loud voice* (κράζας φωνῇ μεγάλῃ).¹⁶ But the question that follows (v. 7b) also suggests a confrontational posture. In this connection, the query *What have you to do with me* (τί ἐμοὶ καὶ σοί)? might be restated in these terms: *What have I and you in common?*¹⁷ Indeed, the wide gulf that separates them is strikingly revealed in his identification of Jesus by His correct name and title. Ironically (as in Mk. 1:23-24), Jesus is now recognized for who and what He is by a member of the demonic world. Commentators vary in their assessment of the reason for this

¹⁵ e.g., see **Mann**, 279.

¹⁶ **Lane**, 183.

¹⁷ **Branscombe**, 91.

recognition. In this context, it might be construed as an indication of the supernatural knowledge which demons possess.¹⁸ But others perceive a practical motive at work as well: in a manner consistent with ancient presuppositions regarding the power and advantage that proceeds from a familiarity with an adversary's name, the demoniac might be seizing an opportunity to gain mastery over his superior opponent.¹⁹

While the grandiose appellation *Son of God, of the Most High* (ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ τοῦ ὑψίστου) appears to be messianic, it really focuses upon Jesus' divine origin. In this connection, however, it assumes a particular relevance in light of its utterance in a non-Jewish, Gentile context.²⁰ It is paradoxical indeed that someone in the grip of an unclean spirit would implore Jesus *by God* (ὁρκίζω σε τὸν Θεόν) for mercy (v. 7b). But the specific request *do not torment me* (μὴ με βασανίσῃς) must be understood in eschatological terms. In a very real sense, the inauguration of God's Kingdom through the Son of God that the demoniac readily recognizes signals the beginning of the end of evil's reign. From this standpoint, v. 7b finds a fuller explanation in *Matthew's* parallel account (8:29): *Have you come here to torment us before the appointed time?*²¹ V. 8 assumes a

¹⁸ Lane, 183-84; NJBC, 607a; Anderson, 148.

¹⁹ Lane, 183.

²⁰ Hooker, 143: The term 'the Most High God' is one found in the Old Testament, mostly used by non-Israelites in speaking of Israel's God: it is therefore appropriate in the mouth of one who was living in Gentile territory and was presumably himself a Gentile. Cf., Dan. 3:99: *It has seemed good to me* [i.e., King Nebuchadnezzar] *to publish the signs and wonders which the most high God has accomplished in my regard.* According to Johnson (102), the epithet "Most High" (ὕψιστος) had been applied to Zeus. Also see the remarks of Kittel (1243), who designates 'Most High' as a favourite term for God in Hellenistic Judaism, which brings together the Old Testament title for God and the Greek concept of the chief god.

²¹ The idea that God gave the evil spirits free rein over humans until the end time is prominent in the Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament. Cf., En.

parenthetical role, and serves to explain the reaction of the demoniac in the preceding verse: *For He had been saying to him* (ἔλεγεν γὰρ αὐτῷ): ‘*Unclean spirit, come out of the man*’ (ἔξελθε τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἀκάθαρτον ἐκ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου). The imperfect tense of the verb ἔλεγεν suggests that the exorcism had already transpired.²² If this is the case, then Jesus has recognized the presence of an evil spirit. Thus, the command *come out of the man* confirms that the Gerasene has not been speaking on his own, but at the demon’s prompting.

Jesus’ request for the demon’s name at v. 9a parallels the demoniac’s identification of His own name and title at v. 7. But this surely amounts to a rhetorical question (and not an implied admission of ignorance on Jesus’ part). Indeed, as the Son of God, Jesus’ knowledge would have to supersede any cognitive capacity displayed by the demon. Interestingly, however, the demon’s impotence before Jesus is borne out by his failure to gain mastery over Christ after identifying Him by name. According to the ancient belief in the efficacy that flows from naming one’s opponent, the

16,1: *the spirits having gone forth, shall destroy without...judgment...until the day of the consummation.* Jub. 10:8: ‘*Lord, Creator, let some of them remain before me...and do all that I shall say...for if some are not left to me, I shall not be able to execute the power of my will on the sons of men.*’

²² The position of this verse has been the subject of extensive debate. According to Perkins (583a-584b), “This juxtaposition may have belonged to the tradition as Mark knew it, since he explains the demon’s response by telling readers that Jesus had already told the demon to leave (v. 8).” Mann (279), on the other hand, offers the following assessment: Mark’s v. 8 must be regarded as editorial, perhaps as an explanation for the frantic behaviour. If this explanation is rejected, there is the possibility that the author is using his Lucan version, replacing Luke’s *parengeien* by *elegen* (*was already saying*), changing Luke’s indirect speech to direct, and moving Luke’s description of the demoniac to vv. 3-5. It must be said that proponents of Markan priority would reply that Luke (as a far more elegant prose writer) improved upon the text before him. Lane (184, n. 16) rules out the suggestion of O. Bauernfeind that v. 8 originally stood before v. 7, and possibly in place of v. 6. Instead, he endorses the position I am adopting, namely, that v. 8 is an “explanatory insertion” by Mark.

demon should have won the day immediately. In this case, however, his opponent is no ordinary human, but rather, the *Son of God, of the Most High*. In my estimation, then, Jesus' question *What is your name?* amounts to a literary device intended for the reader's benefit. The reply that the question sets up enables us to learn the demon's identity in a more specific manner. The response (v. 9b), in fact, is a puzzling one, in light of its import and grammar alike: *Legion is my name* (λεγιὼν ὄνομά μοι), he states, *because we are many* (ὅτι πολλοί ἐσμεν).

Is it possible that the evangelist resorted to a loan word which carried the negative connotation of an *evil multitude* or a *violent band* in the mind of his readers?²³ In this respect, the term λεγιὼν no doubt assumed a pejorative import for those under the oppressive heel of Roman domination, in the way that terms like 'Gestapo' and 'KGB' would inspire fear and horror in the twentieth century. But any confusion surrounding the demon's name is only compounded by the conjoining of the first person singular (μοι) and the first person plural (ἐσμεν) in the same sentence. In effect, the demon now speaks (but through the possessed man) on behalf of a whole entourage of demons, as expressed by means of the collective noun λεγιὼν.²⁴ The same voice carries over into v. 10, where the demon

²³ Aside from Mk. 5:9, in point of fact, the word only appears at Mt. 26:53 and Lk. 8:30. In *Luke*, it emerges in the parallel account of Mk. 5:1-20. In *Matthew*, however, Jesus applies it to the angels that the Father has placed at His disposal. As Kittel (505) observes, the underlying idea here is one of extremely powerful forces.

²⁴ Cf., Lane's remarks (184-85): The term "Legion" is not strictly a Latinism (*legio*); like other military and governmental terms, it had entered the language and is found not only in Hellenistic Greek but in Aramaic as well. It is difficult to know what meaning to place upon the term. The answer may express the man's sense of being possessed by an aggregate of uncoordinated impulses and evil forces which have so impaired his ego that the spirits speak and act through him. It is probable that the many demons can be referred to as a single being because they are in common possession of the same victim, but it is not possible to ascertain the exact nuance expressed in the term "Legion. But as Hooker astutely observes (143), *Mark's* apparent difficulty with grammar in this verse "reflects not

appeals to Jesus for toleration. Here, *πολλά* intensifies the verbal idea (conveying the notion of appealing *urgently*, or more literally, *many times*, in an insistent manner).

Specifically, *λεγιὼν* appeals to Jesus *not to expel him from the territory* (ἵνα μὴ αὐτὰ ἀποστείλῃ ἔξ τῆς χώρας). The request lends itself to two interpretations. On the one hand, it might reflect a desire to maintain his current base of operations in the area around the tombs. In the scriptural tradition, the expulsion of demons resulted in their banishment to desert regions, the usual haunt of evil spirits.²⁵ This point is more apparent in the Lukan version (Lk. 8:31), where the place of banishment is designated as the *abyss*, the final place of punishment: *And they besought Him that He would not command them to go out into the abyss* (εἰς τὴν ἄβυσσον).²⁶

only the difficulty of speaking consistently of one man with many demons, but the divided condition of the man himself.” Curiously, this aspect of the Markan version of the story (whereby one demon becomes many) provides something of a common ground with the Matthean version and its incorporation of two demons into the story from the outset.

²⁵ Cf., Tb. 8:3 (where the expelled demon flees to the desert of Upper Egypt, the dwelling place of demons) and Lk. 11:24 (*When an unclean spirit goes out of someone, it roams through arid regions searching for rest but, finding none, it says, I shall return to my home from which I came.*).

²⁶ Kittel (2) sums up the meanings inherent in ἄβυσσος in these terms: it was originally an adjective for an implied “earth,” but it was used in Greek to designate the depths of the original time, the primal ocean, and the realm of the dead; in the LXX, it denotes the original flood, and only later the world of the dead. Cf., G. Schwarz, “‘Aus Der Gegend’ (Markus v. 10b),” NTS 22 (#2, 1976): 214-215, who contends that the disparity between *Mark’s* use of χώραν and *Luke’s* ἄβυσσος is attributable to a confusion between Aramaic terms designating ‘place’ and ‘deep’:

“ἄβυσσος und χώρα stehen einander unvereinbar gegenüber. Eine Erklärung ist demnach, falls überhaupt, nur über das Aramäische möglich; hier (damit nehme ich das Ergebnis vorweg): über die Ähnlichkeit der zugrundezulegenden aramäischen Vokabeln tehoma und tehuma, die-zumal im nichtvokalisiertem Text oder bei nachlässiger Aussprache sehr leicht miteinander verwechselt

But in eschatological terms (and in a manner consistent with his earlier request at v. 7), the demon might wish to protect his tenuous foothold in the wider χώρον of the world, where demons are still able to victimize humans with impunity. Jesus' very appearance indicates that God is now in the process of reclaiming this χώρον and neutralizing the evil forces that dominate it. From this standpoint, the demon's appeal amounts to a bold act that presupposes a bargaining position.

In v. 11, the narrative shifts the reader's attention to the large herd of swine feeding on the nearby hillside. While this information is crucial to the rest of the story, it also alerts us to a highly significant detail. The *territory of the Gerasenes*, as we have observed above (v. 1) is part of the pagan world. From the Jewish perspective, only Gentiles would maintain a herd of animals deemed unclean or impure. In the Jewish mind, such animals would be placed on a par with the unclean spirits possessing the demoniac. For this reason, the demons' request in v. 12 is wholly logical. As an alternative to expulsion from the territory, they desire to enter creatures that are unclean like themselves, and by implication, to remain in the realm of the ungodly. The apparent goal of this request is possession of the swine, in lieu of the exorcised Gerasene. Once again, we observe an interesting (if not somewhat confusing) shift in voice: the demons now speak collectively (πέμψον ἡμᾶς/ἐισέλθαμεν) in seeking entry into the their bestial counterparts. Accordingly, Jesus' affirmative response (v. 13) is directed toward the multitude (καὶ ἐπέτρεψεν αὐτοῖς), rather than the original speaker.²⁷

werden können. Wie der Kontext ausweist (vor allem des Ausfahren der Dämonen in die Schweine), dürfte tehomä primär sein. In ihn zu fahren, nicht lediglich 'aus der Gegend' vertrieben zu werden, war es, was die Dämonen fürchteten."

²⁷ Jesus' acquiescence in the demons' request might be interpreted as an indication that the forces of evil have been put on notice that their time is at hand. At any rate, their possession of the swine is preferable to their possession of a human being. As subsequent developments show, however, their habitation in the swine will be extremely brief. Jesus' indirect

The demons' possession of the swine and the fatal stampede it precipitates has generated much scholarly discussion.²⁸ Did the demoniac's earlier commotion prompt their panic and demise? Were the demons destroyed along with the swine? Did Jesus condone this destruction of livestock and personal property? While such questions are intriguing, our analysis must confine itself to what the text tells us. The reader is simply informed that *the herd rushed head-long down the steep slope into the sea* (ὤρμησεν ἡ ἀγέλη κατὰ τοῦ κρημνοῦ εἰς τὴν θάλασσαν), and that *they were drowned* (ἐπνίγοντο). Interestingly, the Markan account is the only version to mention the number of swine. Commentators, in fact, have perceived a link between the explicit reference to *about two thousand* (ὡς δισχίλιοι) *swine* and the cryptic use of λεγιῶν at v. 9.

Since a typical Roman Legion comprised between five and six thousand troops, the number cited at v. 13 might represent an underestimate of such a unit's size (or else, an accurate reference to a reduced auxiliary contingent of battalion strength). In this regard, **Perkins** (584a) points out that the 10th Roman Legion (stationed in Palestine since 6 C.E.) had used the boar as its standard insignia. The comparison between demons who have already identified themselves as λεγιῶν and swine that call to mind Roman occupation forces has obvious polemical potential. From this standpoint, Jesus' authority supersedes the power of the demons, as well as the power of the greatest secular empire. But this interpretation is highly speculative. As **Perkins** further observes (584a), any such comparison is intended to describe the destructiveness of the demons, and thereby, aims at comparing the demons to the Roman legions (not *vice versa*). As the behavior of the demoniac and swine so graphically demonstrate, unclean spirits are inextricably bound up with a drive toward death. Demons and swine alike gravitate toward the sea, the locus of evil.

condoning of this destruction of animal life is puzzling, and finds a strange counterpart in the account of the withered fig tree at Mk. 11:12-14; 20-21.

²⁸ For a sampling of the theories pertinent to this discussion, see the discussion in Van der Loos, *The Miracles of Jesus*, 390-391.

This startling chain of events prompts the swineherds to flee and report the incident in the town and neighboring hamlets (v. 14a). Their report, in turn, draws the curious to the scene (v. 14b). Surprisingly, what they now observe arouses their fear (v. 15): they find the former demoniac seated, fully clothed, and enjoying a sound mind (σωφρονεῖν). The awkward insertion of the phrase *the one who had the legion* immediately after this description appears somewhat redundant. On the surface, it seems like a reminder that this is the same individual who was ranting and raving earlier in the passage. The bystanders' fear apparently proceeds from the radical transformation in his overall appearance and demeanor. (Why, for that matter, would this positive development inspire their fear at all?) But after the eyewitnesses relate precisely what happened to the Gerasene and to the herd (v. 16), their fear shifts to Jesus. They implore Him to leave their district (v. 17).

The overall reaction of the townspeople reveals a curious reversal of events; in effect, they now exhibit aspects of the former demoniac's behavior. Like him, they fear Jesus and attempt to drive Him away. Any considerations of the motives at work here, of course, must be purely conjectural. Clearly, however, these people find something about Jesus extremely unsettling. But in keeping with the 'uncleanness' and lack of faith that permeates their lives, this negative response is only to be expected.²⁹ Yet, is the lack of understanding on their part any more disappointing than what we observe among the Jews? To a great extent, Christ's rejection by these Gentiles parallels the hostility meted out by the scribes and his own relatives (Mk. 3:20-35).

Jesus' compliance with their wishes is confirmed by the reference to His *getting in the boat* (v. 18). Instead of merely expressing gratitude for his healing, the Gerasene begs Jesus *that he might stay*

²⁹ From the Jewish perspective, these people were members of a culture which not only kept swine, but consumed the meat from such unclean animals as well. Their apparent disordering of priorities (i.e., to the extent that they view one who casts out demons as an object of fear) is wholly consistent with their depiction as unclean persons.

with Him (ἵνα μετ' αὐτοῦ). This plea for acceptance into Jesus' immediate circle is strikingly close to the formula found at Mk. 3:14, in connection with Jesus' call of the Twelve: *And He ordained...that they should be with Him* (ἵνα ᾧσιν μετ' αὐτοῦ). But true discipleship does not proceed from the initiative of the prospective disciple. The call must come from Christ. While Jesus denies this apparently sincere request (v. 19a), the rejection by no means rules out the Gerasene's suitability to spread the Good News. Jesus does not reject the man as a disciple *per se*. But anything he now does in spreading the word is determined by Jesus. Just as the call to discipleship must come from Christ, the call to preaching must come from Christ as well. Like the rich young man (Mk. 10:17-22), the healed Gerasene now learns that no one can set a personal agenda as Jesus' disciple. Accordingly, Jesus issues a two-fold command (v. 19b): *first*, 'Go back to your home, to your family' (εἰς τὸν οἶκόν σου πρὸς τοὺς σοὺς); *secondly*, 'announce to them all that the Lord has done for you and had mercy on you' (ἀπαγγεῖλον αὐτοῖς ὅσα ὁ κύριος σοι πεποίηκεν καὶ ἡλέησέν σε).

Ironically, Jesus' order to return εἰς τὸν οἶκόν σου πρὸς τοὺς σοὺς reminds us of His indictment of that would-be disciple at Lk. 9:61 (for desiring to do precisely this).³⁰ Here, however, Jesus obviously perceives a more useful role for this individual among his own people than within the immediate entourage of disciples. In this respect, the verb ἀπαγγέλλειν is inextricably connected with the notion of evangelization.³¹ Paradoxically, then, the Gerasene's rejection entails nothing less than a commission to preach the word to the Gentiles. Jesus' instruction about the content of this preaching is noteworthy for two reasons. On the one hand, the act of healing is equated with an act of mercy. The implicit message is that Jesus' compassion is open to everyone (including Gentiles), and that it observes no national or cultural boundaries. On the other hand, this merciful act is attributed specifically to ὁ κύριος, a title reserved for

³⁰ Lk. 9:61: *And yet another said, 'I will follow after you, Lord, but first permit me to take leave of my household* (τοῖς εἰς τὸν οἶκόν μου).

³¹ Cf., Ac. 17:30; 26:20; I Cor. 14:25.

God alone that effectively links the present verse with the demoniac's identification of Jesus as υἱὲ τοῦ Θεοῦ τοῦ ὑψίστου (v. 7).³² This Lordship is clearly revealed on the basis of Jesus' ability to heal and restore the man formerly in the grip of demonic powers.

In compliance with Jesus' command, the Gerasene proclaims what He did for him in the Decapolis (v. 20). On the basis of what we find earlier in Mark (1:25;44; 3:12; 5:43; 7:36), we can easily assume that this represents an overstepping of the specific directive to report what has happened to his home and family. In those earlier passages, Jesus explicitly prohibited any attempt to reveal His power or identity. No such restrictions, however, are imposed on the Gerasene. For this reason, home and family may be construed in the broadest possible sense to include the entire area. By means of this enthusiastic communication, the Gerasene establishes a foothold in Gentile territory for the furtherance of the Kingdom. The fact that this preaching is a cause of marvel or wonder among his hearers indicates an initial attraction to Jesus and the authenticity of His message.

Concluding Reflections on the Eschatological Dimension of Mk. 5:1-20

Jesus' role as healer is closely connected with His salvific enterprise. But because this enterprise is all-embracing, it is not confined to the Jewish world alone. Jesus' exorcism and commissioning of the Gerasene demoniac graphically demonstrates that His liberating message of love and forgiveness encompasses the Gentile world as well. By virtue of this healing, the seeds are sown for subsequent missionary activities in the region. In this incident, Jesus' authority (and the power it encompasses) is revealed in an extremely hard-hitting manner. Indeed, His very appearance in the environs of Gerasa entails an overturning of priorities on every

³² But as Kittel (492) points out, when God is designated as κύριος in the New Testament, it is generally in the context of Old Testament quotations or allusions. Mk. 5:19, in fact, is the only place in the Synoptic Gospels in which God is referred to as ὁ κύριος. Cf., I Cor. 10:9; I Tim. 6:15; Heb. 7:21; Rev. 1:8; 11:15; 22:6.

level: demons are put on the defensive and cast out; the man they possessed and held in bondage is completely healed and transformed; the once placid countryside (at least on the surface) is plunged into utter chaos; people feel threatened by this challenge to the status quo; a religious and cultural 'outsider' is enlisted in spreading the Good News. In effect, everything must give way in the face of the coming of God's Kingdom. Accordingly, the demons' address of Jesus as Son of God of the Most High finds ready confirmation in His works. All of this brings to the fore an eschatological or apocalyptic dimension of the story. In the startling image of the herd tumbling headlong down the ravine, we find a metaphor for the passing of an age dominated by sin and impurity.³³ This occurrence, it seems, reflects the general thrust of Jesus' prophecy at the end of the Gospel (Mk. 13:8) and its reference to the approaching time when nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom.

Broadly speaking, Mk. 13 as a whole points to the signs which indicate both the consummation of the present age and the imminent arrival of the Son of Man (Mk. 13:24,ff.). Such signs encompass a

³³ In effect, Jesus' actions and mighty deeds rock the respective worlds and presuppositions of Jews and Gentiles alike. The issue of reader response is relevant here. Earl S. Johnson, Jr. ("Mark 5:1-20: The Other Side," *Irish Bible Studies* 20 (April, 1998): 50-74) raises the intriguing question as to how the Roman population of Gerasa and the Decapolis would have understood Jesus, in light of certain key concepts of sacred space, death, and atonement. In contrast to Jewish attitudes, Johnson points out (65) that pigs played an important part in Roman religious practice from the early days of the Republic and were linked with true piety as customary sacrificial animals. Johnson (73) assesses the different responses of Jews and pagan Romans to Jesus' actions in terms of the following comparison: "If the story of the cleansing of the Temple presents to the Jews the unimaginable prospect that the Temple, its economic basis... and its sacrificial system...is to be overthrown by Jesus through his crucifixion, so 5:1-20 suggests to the Gentile reader living in the Roman Empire that the revered and traditional sacrifices for atonement and preparation for the next life will also be replaced by Jesus' one atoning death. That Gentiles are amazed by Jesus' actions and claims (5:15,17,20) is no more surprising than his rejection by the Jews."

host of tribulations and upheavals in a manner wholly consistent with later Jewish apocalypticism. In this context, however, they have a special connection with the realization of the Kingdom of God in the person of Jesus. In my estimation, then, what we encounter in Mk. 5:1-20 can be viewed as part and parcel of the provocative themes and language of Mk. 13. Can the curious link between demons, impure animals, and the term 'legion' which emerges in the story of the Gerasene be construed as anticipating the reference to the 'desolating abomination' of the Romans' defilement of the Temple at Mk. 13:14? Mk. 13, however, suggests an *imminent* eschatology that stands in sharp contrast to the *realized* eschatology which permeates the earlier part of the Gospel (as reflected in Mk.5:1-20 and other passages).

How do the *imminent* and *realized* eschatologies differ in *Mark*? Perhaps (as one commentator observes), Mk. 13 reflects the evangelist's wish to assure those persecuted Christians (anxious as to why Jesus had not yet returned to deliver them from present trials) that their very expectation of an early return of Christ was misplaced.³⁴ Such an expectation, in fact, is reflected at Mk. 15:43,

³⁴ H.A. Guy, *The Gospel of Mark* (London/Melbourne/Toronto: Macmillan; New York: St. Martin's Press, 1968), 155-56. See the informative survey of Guelich (xxxviii-xxxix), which provides the following profile of scholarly opinions on this topic: W. Marxsen (*Mark the Evangelist: Studies on the Redaction History of the Gospel*, trans. J. Boyce, et al. [Nashville: Abingdon, 1969]) argues that the evangelist (after the beginning of the Jewish War) used the Jesus-tradition to write a kerygmatic summons to the Church at Jerusalem to go to Galilee to meet Christ; W. Kelber (*The Kingdom in Mark. A New Place and a New Time* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974], 139), on the other hand, contends that the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple undermined the imminent eschatology, and therefore, revealed that such an eschatology was based on a false concept of time and a flawed choice of place that stood in need of redefining; accordingly, H.C. Kee (*Community of the New Age: Studies in Mark's Gospel* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977], 106) depicts Mark's community as viewing itself as occupying the "time between" Jesus' coming and the consummation of the Kingdom; A.M. Ambrozic (*The Hidden Kingdom: A Redaction-critical Study of the References to the Kingdom of God in Mark's Gospel*, CBQ, MS 2 [Washington, D.C.: CBA,

which depicts Joseph of Arimathea as *himself awaiting the Kingdom of God*. Accordingly, Mk. 13:33 admonishes the disciples (as representatives of the Christian community) that *you do not know when the time will come*. Earlier in the Gospel, however, we have every indication that the establishment of God's Kingdom is *already* underway in the life and ministry of Jesus. *This is the time of fulfillment*, Mk. 1:15 proclaims, *the Kingdom of God is at hand*. The striking bridal metaphor of Mk. 2:19 likewise announces the forging of a new loving bond between God and humanity in Jesus' person, mission, and relationship with His disciples. Ironically, however, the very disciples who have been granted *the mystery of the Kingdom of God* (Mk.4:11) are slow to grasp the wonders that signal its arrival. This is why the account of the Gerasene demoniac is so powerful: not only does it demonstrate the universality of Christ's call to redemption (as does the story of the Syrophoenician woman at Mk. 8:24,ff.), but it also conveys a profound sense of the emergence of the Kingdom that reverberates through the entire Gospel.

ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations have been adopted for recurrent references to several key sources cited throughout the paper.

Anderson	Hugh Anderson, <i>The Gospel of Mark. New Century Bible</i> (London: Oliphants, 1976)
Boring	M. Eugene Boring, "The Gospel of Matthew," <i>The New Interpreters Bible</i> , Volume VIII (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995).
Branscombe	B. Harvie Branscombe, <i>The Gospel of Mark. The Moffatt New Testament Commentary</i> (London:

1972], 244) argues that while Jesus inaugurates God's Kingdom by His words and deeds, its presence remains hidden until the end-time.

	Hodder and Stoughton, 1964).
Brown	Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, and Roland Murphy (editors), <i>The New Jerome Biblical Commentary</i> (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1990).
Culpeper	Alan Culpeper, "The Gospel of Luke," <i>The New Interpreters Bible</i> (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995).
Fitzmyer	Joseph A. Fitzmyer, <i>The Gospel According to Luke</i> (Translation with Introduction and Commentary), in <i>The Anchor Bible</i> series, Volume 28 (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Company, 1981).
Gnilka	Joachim Gnilka, <i>Das Evangelium nach Markus. Teilband I</i> (Zurich: Benziger Verlag, 1978).
Guelich	Robert A. Guelich, <i>Word Biblical Commentary</i> , Volume 34A. <i>Mark 1-8:26</i> (Dallas: Word Books, Publisher, 1989).
Hooker	Morna D. Hooker, <i>The Gospel According to Saint Mark. Black's New Testament Commentary</i> (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991).
Johnson	Sherman E. Johnson, <i>A Commentary on the Gospel According to Mark. Black's New Testament Commentaries</i> (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1960).
Kittel	Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich (editors), <i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> . Translated and Abridged in one volume by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1985).
Lane	William L. Lane, <i>Commentary on the Gospel of Mark. The New International Commentary on the New Testament</i> (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974).
Mann	C.S. Mann, <i>The Gospel According to Mark</i> (Translation with Introduction and Commentary) in <i>The Anchor Bible</i> series, Volume 27 (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Company, 1986).
Perkins	PHEME Perkins, "The Gospel of Mark," <i>The New</i>

	<i>Interpreters Bible</i> , Volume VIII (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995).
Pesch	Rudolf Pesch, <i>Das Markusevangelium</i> . I Teil (Freiburg/Basel/Wein: Herder, 1984).

Jesus' Reply to his Mother at Cana of Galilee (John 2:4)

J.C. O'Neill

The idiom "What between you and me?" was used to show complete agreement as well as to show complete disagreement. Jesus entirely accepted the task Mary implicitly laid on him. His next sentence began "not" rather than "not yet", and was a rhetorical question: "Has not my hour come?"

I well remember the Rev F.A. Simpson, the Cambridge historian, from the days when I was a research student in the 1950s. I heard his one sermon, on the Good Samaritan. He was reputed to have difficulties of belief. "How can one believe in the divinity of Our Lord when he was so unconscionably rude to his mother."¹ Commentators have done their best to soften the *prima facie* sharp rebuke of Jesus to his mother in John 2:4: Mary said, "They have no more wine", and Jesus answered, "O woman, what have you to do with me? My hour is not yet come" (RSV). Yet the best of these attempts, by J. Duncan M. Derrett, still retains at least the shadow of a remonstrance: "You [Mary, and your friends who are giving the feast and who are aggrieved that I and my disciples are partly responsible for the wine running out and who, if we were in future to marry, would require presents from the bridegroom's family]

¹ Stephen Wakelam's radio play, "The Good Samaritan", broadcast on 27 September 2000 on BBC Radio 4, reminded me of Simpson and provided the quotation used above.

have no reason to blame me and my family here [the disciples]. The problem is taken care of.”²

There is one passage from the Old Testament that has, so far as I know, not been brought into the discussion. It suggests that the expression, “What is there between me and you?” is capable of indicating the greatest willingness to carry out the implied request. The elliptical expression can either mean (as in most other examples), “What [possible agreement can there be] between me and you?” or, “What [possible disagreement can there be] between me and you?” Mary seems to have understood it in this latter sense, for she immediately tells the servants to do whatever Jesus is to ask of them (John 2:5).

Similarly, in the example I am about to discuss, Abraham immediately accedes to the implied offer of Ephron made to him in a statement that contains a similar interrogative expression (Gen 23:15-16).

In Genesis 23, Abraham asks the children of Heth if he may buy a tomb in which to bury Sarah. The Hittites are willing to let him have a grave, but unwilling to let him buy possession of any of their land. Abraham sharpens his request by naming a cave belonging to Ephron the Hittite, and again says that he will pay the full price. Ephron is unwilling to sell, but says he will give Abraham both the cave and the field in which it lies. Abraham again insists that he will buy the field.

Ephron at last yields, and slips in the information that the field and the cave are very expensive: four hundred shekels (cf. six thousand shekels for the whole city of Samaria, 1 Kings 16:24). In the end, Ephron has generously yielded, and Abraham’s persistent offer to be generous and pay good money has been met. Ephron says, “What is this [large sum] between me and you?” In other

² J. Duncan M. Derrett, ““What have I to do with thee?””, *Law in the New Testament* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1970), pp. 238-243; George R. Beasley-Murray, *John* (Word Biblical Commentary 36; Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1987), pp. 34-5.

words, "What possible disagreement can there be between me, who am at last willing to sell, and you, who have always been willing to buy?"³

The idiom also seems to be found in the message Pilate's wife sent to him during the proceedings against Jesus. The usual translation, "Have thou nothing to do with that just man" (Matt 27:19, AV), is inadequate. How could Pilate have nothing to do with a man whose fate he was bound to decide, one way or the other? I suggest that the force of the idiom was, "[Let] nothing [in the way of disagreement arise] between you [as judge] and that innocent man."

Derrett, in the attempt to soften the harshness of Jesus' words to his mother that I have already cited, relied on a report by some Dominican missionaries at the end of the nineteenth century, that in Kurdistan in East Syria the words *man bain anta un ana!*, which is equivalent to τί ἐμοὶ καὶ σοί, were used to protest the most cordial harmony of disposition of one towards the other: "What possible difference could subsist between me and you?"⁴ A. Ailinger in 1927 reported modern Palestinian Arabic as using the idiom in the same favourable sense.⁵ Paul Gächter doubts that the modern expression is indeed equivalent to the form in John 2:4, and,

³ Hermann Gunkel, *Genesis* (Handkommentar zum Alten Testament, I.1; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1902), pp. 243-4; Gerhard von Rad, *Das erste Buch Mose* (Part 3; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1952), pp. 211-213; *Genesis: A Commentary* (London: SCM, 1961), pp. 242-4.

⁴ Derrett, *Law in the New Testament*, pp. 241-2; Paul Gächter [insert Umlaut], "Maria in Kana", *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 55 (1931), 351-402 at 372 citing L. Mittermaier, "Die Mutter Jesu auf der Hochzeit zu Kana", *Passauer Theologisch-Praktische Monatsschrift* 3 (1893), 713-716, which I have been unable to see.

⁵ In an article in *Theologisch-praktische Quartalschrift* 80 (Linz, 1927), 360-1, which I have not seen, reported by Gächter *ZKTh* 55 (1931), 372 note 2.

in any case, holds that the affirmative use of the expression is a relatively modern development.⁶

The evidence from Gen 23:15-16 and Matt 27:19 helps to overthrow this conclusion on both counts. Gen 23:15 בִּנְיָ וּבִינָה מִהֲדוּאָּ departs from the usual מִהֲלִי וְלָךְ of Judges 11:12; 2Sam 16:10 &c. but is demonstrably the same idiom. Matt 27:19, μηδὲν σοὶ καὶ τῷ δικαίῳ ἐκείνῳ departs from the usual τί ἡμῖν καὶ σοί of Matt 8:29 &c. but is demonstrably the same idiom. In Jonah 3:9 and 3:16 “Who are you?” and “Who are you, my daughter?” are the same in Hebrew, but carry quite different meanings.⁷ Similarly, the elliptical expression we are considering was understandable, according to context, in one sense or another. How could Jesus even appear not to honour his mother, as the Ten Commandments bade him? Everyone would know the sense was favourable.

If we apply all this to John 2:4, Jesus’ answer to Mary’s implied request is, “What possible disagreement could there be between you, my dear, and me?” The address “O woman” must, of course, be an honorific title expressing great affection. Beasley-Murray draws our attention to the way in which Pheroras’s wife reports how her devoted husband addressed her, using the words we translate literally as “O woman” (Josephus, Ant. 17.74). See the full evidence in Paul Gaechter, pp. 373-6. Gaechter makes much of the absence of any report of a son addressing his mother as “Woman”, but this is probably accidental. There are plenty of good examples of the honorific usage by husbands to wives, and a son could hardly be charged with implying a rejection of the proper filial relationship to his mother because he used this form. Jesus, then, used this expression to accede most readily to Mary’s suggestion that he should come to the aid of their host when the wine had run out.

⁶ Gächter *ZKTh* 55 (1931), 372-3.

⁷ George A. F. Knight, *Ruth and Jonah: Introduction and Commentary* (Torch Bible Commentaries; London: SCM, 1950), p. 38. I owe a great deal to George Knight, whom I once heard lecture in the Assembly Hall, Melbourne, as a student. This commentary was given to me by my grandmother (at my request) on my 20th birthday.

But how do we explain the following sentence, "My hour has not yet come?" This does imply an obstacle to his granting the request, although Mary in verse 5 behaves as though the obstacle has been overcome.

It seems that the usual force of the idiomatic expression, "What between me and you?", meaning "What agreement can there possibly be between me and you?" has led a scribe to insert a note of rebuke into the next sentence: "My hour has not *yet* come." This tendency would have been reinforced by the precedents in John 7:30 and 8:20 (cf. John 7:6,8). Probably the original text read simply, οὐκ ἤκει ἡ ὥρα μου, which may plausibly be interpreted as another question, "Has not my hour come?", "My hour has come, has it not?" The words οὐ and οὐπω were often interchanged in the manuscript tradition.⁸ The fact that the disciples were invited to the wedding as disciples, together with Jesus and his mother, shows that messianic expectations were in the air. The Messiah was probably expected to give both bread and wine as Melchizedek gave Abraham bread and wine (Gen 14:18). There was a tradition that wine preserved in its grapes in the Temple from the day the world was made would be drunk at the end (Targum Song of Songs 8:2; San 99a). Gen 49:10-12, which pictures Judah as a ruler who washes his garments in wine and whose eyes are red with wine, was interpreted as a prophecy of the Messiah. Targum Pseudo Jonathan Gen 49:11: "how fair is the king messiah who will arise from among those of the house of Judah."⁹

If this reading of the text is the true one, there is no longer any need to conclude that Jesus was "placing himself beyond

⁸ In the following list, the manuscripts are named only where the evidence does not appear in NA27: Matt 15:17; 19:9: ου 13; 24:6: ουκ ευθεως U; Mark 4:40; 8:21: Luke 23:53: ουδε εις 22 660; John 6:17; 7:6: ου κ*; 7:8; 7:30: ου sy^{5,c}; 8:57: ου Tatian sy⁵; 11:30: ου D; Acts 8:16: ουδε 88; Phil 3:13; Heb 2:4: σπου p^{46*}; Rev 17:12 ουκ A. In Mark 11:2 ουπω is omitted.

⁹ William Horbury, *Jewish Messianism and the Cult of Christ* (London: SCM, 1998), pp. 50, 111.

natural family relationships even as he demanded of his disciples.”¹⁰ In cases of conflict between obedience to God or to Christ’s call to discipleship, God and Christ must take precedence.¹¹ At the marriage of Cana there is no possible conflict between Jesus’ obedience to his heavenly Father and the honour he owed to his earthly mother. His mother had not laid any direct command on her son. She simply put before him the plight of the bridegroom and his family. Mary must already have understood that Jesus, by gathering disciples, was embarking on a course of action that was bound to raise expectations that he was the Messiah. She would also know that wine was a messianic symbol. Jesus was free to avoid danger and to have nothing to do with providing wine. On my reading, he both willingly accepted, as a dutiful son, the implied request contained in his mother’s report of the shortage of wine, and confirmed that he was also obedient to the heavenly Father’s will. The hour had come for him to put before his people the possibility that he was the Messiah and that the disciples represented the heads of the twelve tribes of Israel. Jesus never said he was the Messiah, but he did many things, like feeding the multitude in the desert and entering Jerusalem on a donkey, that at least raised the question.¹²

If my reading is correct, we have recovered a more straightforward account of the only dialogue between Mary and her

¹⁰ Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John* (The Anchor Bible; New York: Doubleday, 1966), p. 102.

¹¹ Matt 4:22; Mark 1:20; Luke 5:11; Matt 8:21-22; Luke 9:59-60; Matt 10:37; Luke 14:26; Matt 19:29; Mark 10:29; Luke 18:29; Luke 9:61-62; GospThomas 55; 101. On the Gospel of Thomas, see Excursus. I look forward to seeing in print Dr Peter Balla’s monograph on the relation between parents and children in the classical world and in the New Testament. Discussion of the issues with him led me to work up into this note an earlier observation of the importance of Gen 23:15-16.

¹² J.C. O’Neill, *Who did Jesus think he was?* (Biblical Interpretation Series 11; Leiden: Brill, 1995); “Jesus’ Messianic Awareness”, *The Point of It All: Essays on Jesus Christ* (Theological Seminar series 1; Leiden: Deo, 2000), pp. 73-96.

son in the Gospels. All speculation as to why Mary was able to instruct the servants to do whatever Jesus asked of them is now rendered unnecessary. Her instructions followed directly from Jesus' gracious reply to her implied request to provide more wine for the wedding guests.

J.C. O'Neill

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Excursus on Gospel of Thomas Logion 101.

He who does not hate his father and his mother as I do
will not be able to be my disciple.
And he who does not love his father and mother as I do
will not be able to be my disciple.
For my mother ...
but in truth she gave me life.

Most commentators make the last two lines draw a contrast between an earthly mother and a true spiritual mother. It is true that Jesus in the Gospel of the Hebrews calls the Holy Spirit his mother: "Now my mother, the Holy Spirit, took me by one of my hairs and carried me off to the great mountain called Tabor" (Origen on John 2:12; Preuschen p. 67; on Jeremiah 15:4, GCS 6 [1901], p. 128). But Origen himself in his commentary on John notes that this statement is just an extension of Matt 12:50: if anyone who does the will of the Father is his mother, there is nothing unfitting in calling the Holy Spirit his mother. There is no competition implied between the Holy Spirit and his physical mother any more than there is competition implied between the true disciple and his physical mother. Nor is competition between his earthly mother and some spiritual mother implied in GThos 101. The first part of the Logion does not draw a contrast between earthly parents and spiritual

parents but between the two possible attitudes to the same earthly parents, depending on whether or not the parents oppose the will of God for their children. The saying about Jesus' mother is likely also to refer to the one earthly mother. The Coptic word for *true* can just as easily mean *in truth* as stand for *my true mother*.

Seeing the Old Testament through a Lens

Steve Moyise

Readers of this journal will be aware of the interaction between Greg Beale and myself on the use of the Old Testament in the New.¹ In personal correspondence, Beale has been kind enough to say that my work has prompted him to think more deeply about certain matters and this short article is a result of my thinking more deeply about his work.² In his monograph, Beale says that what 'to some may appear to be John's novel interpretations of the Old Testament are the result of his new presuppositional lenses through which he perceives the Old Testament'.³ John's use of Scripture is not arbitrary or *ad hoc* but is the result of a set of presuppositional lenses through which he now views the ancient texts. According to Beale, the most significant of these are:

(1) Christ corporately represents true Israel of the Old and New Testament; (2) history is unified by a wise and sovereign plan, so that the earlier parts of canonical history are designed to correspond typologically and point to later parts of inscripturated history; (3) the age of end-time fulfillment has been inaugurated with Christ's first coming; and (4) in the light of points 2 and 3, the later parts of biblical history interpret earlier parts, so that Christ as the centre of

¹ My 'Reply' to his monograph was published in *IBS* 21 (1999), 54-58. His 'Rejoinder' appeared in *IBS* 21 (1999), 151-180. This perhaps might be called a 'Reflection'.

² For a full discussion of these issues, see my book, *The Old Testament in the New* (Continuum, forthcoming).

³ G. Beale, *John's Use of the Old Testament in Revelation* (JSNTSup 166; Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), p128.

history is the key to interpreting the earlier portions of the Old Testament.⁴

If we grant the viability of these presuppositions, he says, then 'John's interpretation of the Old Testament shows a careful understanding of Old Testament contexts'. On the other hand, if we regard them as false, then John's interpretation of Scripture 'must be seen as alien to the intention of the Old Testament'.⁵ In other words, what might seem to us as 'novel interpretations' are explained by understanding (and accepting) the lenses through which the New Testament authors viewed the ancient texts.

This raises three questions for me. First, are the four presuppositions an accurate description of what John believed or thought he was doing? Second, are they an accurate description of what he was doing from *our* perspective? Some confessional stances will assume that these are one and the same but it is implicit in the 'lens' analogy that people from a different time and culture will see things differently. At the very least, the fall of the Roman empire and the co-existence of Jews and Christians for two thousand years will give us a different lens (or lenses) to that which John possessed. Third, does citing these four presuppositions 'explain' John's use of Scripture? In other words, we might agree that John employed lens 1 when he used the Exodus plagues and lens 3 when he used Dan 7 but does this 'explain' or merely 'rationalise' his use of the Old Testament?

I will take these in reverse order. That the New Testament authors saw the Old Testament in the light of their current beliefs and experience is non-controversial. Indeed, one would be hard-pressed to find an ancient author who did not do this and numerous scholars have used the 'lens' analogy to describe it. However, the analogy is not without its problems for fundamentally, it is an analogy of predictability. There is a direct correspondence between what one

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

sees and how things are. If it makes objects look smaller or fatter, then it always makes objects look smaller or fatter. Thus once one has got to know the particular properties of the lens, one ought to be able to predict what one will see. But when one starts to speak of lenses, in the plural, the image becomes less useful, for how will the interpreter decide which lens or combination of lenses to use in particular situations? In other words, what is the principle at work when a New Testament author cites some texts as being literally true, others as true only when understood in the light of recent events, others as true only when quoted in variant forms, others only when the wording is altered, and yet others only when given an inverted or ironic meaning? The lens image might be an appropriate description for each single instance, but it does not have the explanatory power to describe the overall situation. At root, there is always a deeper question: What is it that governs the *choice* of which lens to use on any particular text?

For example, in order to explain how in Rom 3:10-18, Paul can take texts that draw a distinction between the righteous and the wicked (Psalms 5, 10, 14, 36 and 140) and use them as proof that 'all, both Jews and Greeks, are under the power of sin' (Rom 3:9), Dunn⁶ suggests that Paul now reads the scriptures without the 'blinkers of Jewish presumption of privilege'. Thus texts that originally referred to Gentiles can now be applied to Jews and texts which originally applied to Jews can now be applied to Gentiles. And this explains how in Rom 9:25-26, Paul is able to cite promises addressed to Jews (from Hosea) and apply them to Gentiles. However, when Paul wants to make a particular point about Gentiles (as in Rom 15:9-12), he thinks it is sufficient to cite a number of texts which all contain the word 'Gentiles'. Thus Paul can sometimes apply texts to Gentiles because they contain the word 'Gentiles', and sometimes apply them to Jews because there is now no distinction between Jews and Gentiles. What sort of lens is it that can explain both phenomenon?

⁶ J.D.G.Dunn, *Romans 1-8* (WBC 38, Word books, 1988), p149-151. See my article, 'The Catena of Romans 3:10-18', *ExpT* 106 (1995), pp367-70.

Thus I agree with Beale that John's use of the Old Testament is neither arbitrary or *ad hoc*. One can certainly detect patterns, such as throne visions (Isa 6; Ezek 1; Dan 7) being used to describe a throne vision (Rev 4-5) and restoration oracles (Ezek 40-48; Isa 61) being used to describe the new heaven and earth (Rev 21-22). But I do not think that the four presuppositions listed by Beale 'explain' John's use of Scripture for they are unable to tell us (1) why he chose precisely these texts; (2) which lens or combination of lenses to apply in each instance; and (3) why the wording of some texts required alteration but others are reproduced exactly. The four presuppositions identify John as a Christian of the first century but they do not explain why the book of Revelation is so different from other New Testament books. The lens metaphor, if it is to be useful, would suggest that one could point it at Genesis or Isaiah or Daniel and predict the result. But who could have predicted that John would allude so extensively to the new temple section of Ezekiel (chs 40-48) and then deny the existence of a temple in the new Jerusalem?

I would call this the Postmodern objection. It is not that the four presuppositions are necessarily wrong but it is wrong to think of them as a sort of meta-narrative that 'explains' the book of Revelation. One could not, for example, programme a computer with these four presuppositions and expect the book of Revelation to emerge. They are our attempts to rationalise John's interpretations but they do not explain them in a causal way. Other New Testament authors shared these presuppositions and yet produced something very different. If scholars wish to continue using the 'lens' analogy, they need to clarify (as with all analogies) which aspects of a lens they have in mind.⁷

The second question is the traditional modernist debate that has been raging for over two centuries. John almost certainly thought that his vision of a 'temple-less' New Jerusalem was the true interpretation of Ezek 40-48. But can we? We can certainly be

⁷ It was Beale's use of the 'bowl of fruit' analogy that prompted me to question the nature of the 'lens' analogy.

sympathetic to it and (perhaps) show that it is a *plausible* reading in the light of other scriptures, Jesus' teaching about the temple and perhaps (depending on date) the historical fall of Jerusalem in 70 CE. But can we agree that John has given us the true meaning of this text, what Beale would argue is the meaning intended by Ezekiel? I do not think so. And I believe that this is the cause of much confusion in 'OT in NT' studies. Some scholars try and describe an author's use of Scripture in *our* terms and hence speak of 'arbitrary' 'ad hoc' and 'out of context', because that is how it looks from a modern historical-critical perspective. Others try and describe how it would have looked to the New Testament authors, who would certainly not have used terms like 'arbitrary' 'ad hoc' or 'out of context'. They believed they were Spirit-filled people offering the true meaning of the ancient texts. A third group deny that there is any difference between then and now. The New Testament authors believed they were offering the true meaning of the ancient texts and so should we. It seems to me that there would be less confusion if scholars were more explicit about where they stood on these matters.

Thirdly, are the four presuppositions an accurate description of what John thought he was doing? As our previous debate indicates, Beale is much more confident than I am about reconstructing the intentions of an ancient author. He suggests that it is illogical to believe that we can know the intentions of modern authors, whilst being sceptical about reconstructing the intentions of ancient authors. I would suggest that the difficulties we have experienced in understanding one another's positions (even with dialogue) points in the opposite direction. But let me be more pragmatic. Are the four presuppositions consistent with what we find in the book of Revelation? The answer is probably Yes, though I will conclude this 'reflection' with the following thoughts:

The first needs rewording in that John is unlikely to have thought in terms of Old and New Testament.

John probably thought that 'history is unified by a wise and sovereign plan' but I wonder if there should be some mention of the major disruptions caused by evil forces, disruptions that (on some

readings) are never unified but remain as permanent divisions (Rev 22:15).

Some scholars (eg. N.T.Wright) have questioned whether the New Testament authors thought in terms of first and second comings of Christ.

In general terms, the Christ-event is clearly the most important factor in John's interpretation of Scripture. But it would be wrong to conclude that every text alluded to in Revelation is given a particular 'Christological' interpretation. Richard Hays has made the same point about Paul's use of Scripture.⁸

⁸ R.B.Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (Yale University Press, 1989), ch. 5.

Concise Encyclopedia of Preaching edited by William H. Willimon and Richard Lischer. Louisville, Kentucky. Westminster John Knox Press, 1995. Pp.5 18. ISBN 0-664-21942-X. £30.

“Early one summer morning, a New York policeman delivered a child in a dimly lighted Brooklyn tenement, and, less than three hours later, and only six blocks away, shot and killed a stick-up man who was pulling his gun on him. At the end of the day both the child and the gunman were still nameless. Anonymous birth and anonymous death - and the whole mystery of life and what it’s all about caught up in a story of a policeman’s tour of duty early one summer morning. What is life all about?”

This vivid illustration is just one part of one extract in a book that no preacher would fail to find helpful, stimulating, thought provoking and encouraging. Here is a compendium dedicated to one of the greatest tasks facing the church, preaching the good news of Jesus Christ.

This volume offers advice and instruction on all aspects of preaching. Great preachers from the past are profiled and in some cases a sermon extract gives us a flavour of what it must have been like to be in the congregation when this great man or woman was proclaiming God’s word. There are articles on rhetoric, liturgy, theology, communications, history, style, proclamation, liberation, feminism, church architecture, etc. and all these are related to the preaching of the Word. In short here is everything a preacher needs to know packed into five hundred pages and arranged from A to Z, or rather from Acoustics to Zwingli. The book is truly ecumenical. The preachers put under the spotlight are Catholic and Protestant, male and female, black and white. If one selects only the letter “F,” one must cope with the aggressively liberal Fosdick asking, “Shall the Fundamentalists win?” and with the conservative P.T.Forsyth proclaiming that “Christ is as narrow as the cross.” This book dares to take seriously both Billy Graham utter confidence in the truth of what he preaches and the preaching of Robert Schuller with “his near total inattention to sin, especially its institutional and systemic dimensions.” As befits a book produced in America there is a

serious study of evangelism on television and its impact on the church.

On first opening this volume one might chose to sit at the feet of giants. There they are - Spurgeon, Bunyan, Fosdick, Augustine, Gregory the Great, Newman, Sojourner Truth, Martin Luther King JR., Donne, and many, many others. The essays relate their achievements during their life and their contribution to the general preaching of the church. Spending time in such exalted company cannot fail to inspire those who will never achieve their heights, but might well carry on their great tradition of engaging the people of God with the good news. Who can fail to be impressed by that extemporary sermon preached by Sojourner Truth at a conference where the weakness and inferiority of women was being discussed? She preached on her labours and suffering as a slave. She described how her children were taken from her and sold, and how only Jesus was her friend. Insisting that she had received strength to cope with all this, she ended each section with the resounding refrain, "And ain't I a woman?"

There is plenty of instruction for preachers here. There are articles on illustrations, form, imagination, and delivery. We also find such helpful gems as Humbert of Romans in the thirteenth century outlining what every preacher needs, i.e. enthusiasm for the task, knowledge of how to do it and that vital element which is "grace given by the Spirit and discerned by the church." No preacher could help but be encouraged by H. Grady Davis' poetic appeal; "A sermon should be like a tree. It should be a living organism: with one sturdy thought like a single stem, with natural limbs reaching up into the light." This blends well with the claim of H.E.Luccock that "the power of a sermon lies in its structure, not in its decoration" John Calvin, always austere, urges, "It is the duty of those who preach to use plainness." Nor will anyone be deceived about "quick fix" sermons, for that able Welshman, G. Campbell Morgan [1863-1945], who conducted successful gospel campaigns on both sides of the Atlantic, declared that the recipe for successful preaching is "work; hard work; and again, work."

Reading this book from cover to cover one discovers unusual and fascinating facts. Did you know that nineteen new sermons of St.

Augustine were discovered in the Municipal Library in Mainz as recently as 1990? Did you know that if you decided to read all of Spurgeon's sermons at the rate of one per day, it would take you ten years to read them all? Did you know that Aimee Semple McPherson, one of the pioneers of broadcast preaching, once helped produce a radio thriller, called "Jim Trask, Lone Evangelist"? Did you know that Christianity in India has a long tradition of wandering, independent evangelists, resembling the wandering friars of medieval Europe and that these preachers have left a deep impression on the Indian church? Did you know that Abraham Lincoln did not like preachers to be stiff and motionless in the pulpit, but preferred them to look like they were fighting a swarm of bees? Did you know that Pope Gregory the Great was one of the very first preachers to use non-biblical stories to illustrate his sermons.

Those who have suffered Sunday morning tedium in the pew are not neglected. We discover that Second Clement, one of the earliest Christian sermons, rambles from its main theme. Moreover preachers are urged to avoid the 'elephant sermon', which has a very long introduction and a very short tail of a conclusion. Especially condemned is the Magellan sermon in which the preacher circumnavigates the globe every Sunday.

But why has this book appeared now? The reason is that preaching in North America is going through a considerable revival in the mainline churches that for long relegated the pulpit to the bottom of their list of priorities. Now preaching in Canada and the United States has a spring in its step and a twinkle in its eye. A "New Homiletic" is being produced in dialogue and debate among a large academic community who have studied not only the great preachers of the past but also the modern phenomena of mass media and electronic communication. The New Homiletic in its present form owes much to Fred Craddock [born 1928] who devised the "inductive method" of preaching. This method makes no assumptions about authority. It readily accepts that many in the pew nearly did not come to church at all and are doubtful about the authority of scripture, church and clergy. The preacher must therefore gradually take his audience on a journey from the known to the unknown. The inductive method often shapes its sermon

around a narrative, thereby holding the listener spellbound by the power of a story. The preacher's own method of exploring the text in his or her study may be shared with the listener so that those in the pew may join in the preacher's voyage of discovery. In this volume articles which explore the New Homiletic are to be found under Craddock Fred, Inductive Preaching, Form, Literary Criticism and Homiletics and Preaching in North America.

Especially deserving of mention is Thomas G. Long's article on Form in which he asserts,

"Contemporary sermon form becomes more than the static mould into which the molten sermon is poured; it becomes rather a communicational assembly line along which the sermon is progressively assembled in the minds of the hearers."

Today North America leads the world in pioneering the "New Homiletic" and yet it is freely admitted that a relatively unknown vicar in Brighton who died in 1853 aged only thirty-seven was years ahead of his time. F.W. Robertson anticipated by a century and a half the insights of inductive and narrative preaching. After his death his sermons were collected and became highly influential. Many distinguished preachers including Fosdick counted him as their mentor in preaching. Moreover most of his brief ministry was performed in pain, giving him a special awareness of how the sufferings of Christ set us free. Joseph R. Jeter's article on Robertson concludes with a marvellous tribute:

"Where many saw confusion, Robertson saw truth. Where many saw suffering Robertson saw Christ. The marvellous 'failed' preacher of Brighton continues to guide the church and its preachers."

As with all collections of essays this one has low moments as well as high ones. One must surely protest at Elizabeth Achetemeier's downgrading of the Old Testament by claiming that Old Testament texts can only be preached when accompanied by a corresponding New Testament passage. Surely the Old Testament can stand alone within the Christian Church and still point to the God and Father of

our Lord Jesus? One is also disappointed that although there are articles on Homiletics and Preaching in Africa, Asia, Germany, India, Latin America, North America and Scandinavia, there is no article tracing the development of Homiletics and Preaching in the British Isles. However one's overall impression is one of delight. This book is both a fine volume of serious study and a sign that the preaching of the Word of God is once more near the top of the church's agenda.

Denis Campbell

Theodore Letis, *The Ecclesiastical Text: Text Criticism, Biblical Authority and the Popular Mind* (Philadelphia and Edinburgh: The Institute for Renaissance and Reformation Biblical Studies, 1997; 2nd. ed. 2000), xiv+232 pp., paperback. £13.95

The current crisis in evangelical scholarship has been the focus of a recent spate of theological and historical studies. David Wells' *No Place for Truth* (1993) was hailed by TIME as a 'stinging indictment of evangelicalism's theological corruption', and academics within the camp rushed to apportion blame. Consistent in their conclusions, if not in their methods, Mark Noll's *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (1994), Alister McGrath's *Evangelicalism and the Future of Christianity* (1994), and Os Guinness' *Fit Bodies, Fat Minds* (1995), each traced this failure to the eschatological and separatist legacy of Protestant fundamentalism.

Already revisionists have emerged. Theodore Letis, in *The Ecclesiastical Text*, has provided a series of articles and reviews which offer a probing and disturbing analysis of evangelicalism's current crisis. Its roots are not in twentieth-century fundamentalism, he claims, but in Erasmus' introduction of academic textual criticism into the church in the early sixteenth century.

It is this blurring of the distinction between academy and church which lies behind much of Letis' argument. Arguing that the Bible is the church's book, he does not deny the value of text criticism pursued independently of the church within the academy. What he

does contest is the prevailing assumption that the academy should determine the text of Scripture which the church should receive.

The book's first essay, 'B.B. Warfield, Common-Sense Philosophy and Biblical Criticism', locates the paradigm shift in the Princeton tradition. Protestant dogmaticians had until this point located *infallibility* in those original language texts in the church's contemporary possession - an infallible apograph. The Hodges, for example, admitted 'errors' in Scripture, but argued that they were canonical and consequently existed for a purpose. Warfield, however, argued that infallibility demanded *inerrancy*, and hence could not place ultimate authority in the errant extant manuscripts. In his responses to 'unbelieving scholarship' Warfield argued that Scripture's ultimate authority was located in the inerrant original text - an inerrant autograph which was impossible to recover.

Letis points to the longer Markan ending as evidence of this sea-change in evangelical thought. Neither the Hodges nor Warfield believed the longer ending was part of the text prepared by the gospel's original author. The Hodges nevertheless received it as canonical, and therefore part of sacred writ. Warfield claimed that if it was not part of the original, it was not part of sacred writ.

Letis argues that this is the cause of the evangelical decay. The Warfieldian quest for the original text has entailed a massive misunderstanding of canon and the function of the church in receiving and preserving that canon. Canon involves the final form of the Biblical documents - not their initial form. The current explosion in Bible publishing, he argues, is therefore both a cause and consequence of a crippling lack of respect for the Biblical text within that evangelical constituency which claims to take Biblical authority most seriously: 'Today these sacred texts must have none of the smell of the ancient Near-East upon them; they must be made to speak in an American colloquialism that offers neither a window to the transcendent, nor an entryway to the religious consciousness that animated the communities that composed, preserved and transmitted those materials as a sacred trust' (p. viii). The Bible becomes marketable, subject to the gimmicks of the advertising guru. Letis therefore argues for the separation of the church's text from the academy's reconstruction of autographs. Using the label

'post-critical', he adopts the canonical criticism of B.S. Childs with powerful effect.

As a series of essays and reviews published in various scholarly journals, there are one or two problems in typography - the footnotes are a little erratic, with different conventions being adopted in different essays. For the same reason, there is a little repetition between the essays, but the most serious problem is the lack of an index.

Letis is perhaps a little defensive about his work - no doubt realising that his recommendation of the Majority Text tradition will win him little academic credibility. Yet his work, robust and compelling, requires little defence. Well-written and beautifully produced, Letis' work offers a searing examination of the collapse of evangelical authority in the very area in which they take most pride. Those of us who belong to that movement would do well to take heed.

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